

Gospel according to Mark

Mark 9

(Mk 9, 1-8) This is my beloved Son. Listen to him

[1] He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come in power." [2] After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, [3] and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. [4] Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. [5] Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." [6] He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. [7] Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; then from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." [8] Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

(CCC 459) The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6). On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!" (Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5). Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example (Cf. Mk 8:34). (CCC 151) For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him (Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7). The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me" (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). Because he "has seen the Father", Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27). (CCC 450) From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not "the Lord" (Cf. Rev 11:15; Mk 12:17; Acts 5:29). "The Church... believes that the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master" (GS 10 § 3; cf. 45 § 2).

(Mk 9, 9-13) What rising from the dead meant

[9] As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. [10] So they kept the matter to themselves, **questioning what rising from the dead meant**. [11] Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" [12] He told them, "Elijah will indeed come first and restore all things, yet how is it written regarding the Son of

Man that he must suffer greatly and be treated with contempt? [13] But I tell you that ***Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.***"

(CCC 649) As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise (Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34). Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:17-18). "We believe that Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thess 4:14).

(Mk 9, 14-29) Everything is possible to one who has faith

[14] When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. [15] Immediately on seeing him, the whole crowd was utterly amazed. They ran up to him and greeted him. [16] He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" [17] Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. [18] Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so." [19] He said to them in reply, "O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me." [20] They brought the boy to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. [21] Then he questioned his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "Since childhood. [22] It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." [23] Jesus said to him, "If you can! ***Everything is possible to one who has faith.***" [24] Then the boy's father cried out, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" [25] Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!" [26] Shouting and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out. He became like a corpse, which caused many to say, "He is dead!" [27] But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. [28] When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, "Why could we not drive it out?" [29] He said to them, "***This kind can only come out through prayer.***"

(CCC 26) We begin our profession of faith by saying: "I believe" or "We believe". Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search, then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man, and finally the response of faith. (CCC 89) There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith (Cf. Jn 8:31-32). (CCC 91) All the

faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them (Cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27) and guides them into all truth (Cf. Jn 16:13).

(Mk 9, 30-32) The second announce of Passion

[30] They left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. [31] He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "**The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise.**" [32] But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

(CCC 557) "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1). By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34).

(Mk 9, 33-37) Who is the greatest

[33] They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" [34] But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way **who was the greatest.** [35] Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." [36] Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, [37] "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me."

(CCC 786) Finally, the People of God shares in the *royal* office of Christ. He exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself through his death and Resurrection (Cf. Jn 12:32). Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). For the Christian, "to reign is to serve him," particularly when serving "the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder" (LG 8; cf. 36). The People of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ. The sign of the cross makes kings of all those reborn in Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them as priests, so that, apart from the particular service of our ministry, all spiritual and rational Christians are recognized as members of this royal race and sharers in Christ's priestly office. What, indeed, is as royal for a soul as to govern the body in obedience to God? And what is as priestly as to dedicate a pure conscience to the Lord and to offer the spotless offerings of devotion on the altar of the heart? (St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 4, 1: PL 54, 149). (CCC 2235) Those who exercise authority should do so as a service. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). The exercise of authority is measured morally in terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law.

(Mk 9, 38-41) Whoever is not against us is for us.

[38] John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." [39] Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. [40] **For whoever is not against us is for us.** [41] Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

(CCC 2008) The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit. (CCC 1821) We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will (Cf. Rom 8:28-30; Mt 7:21). In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" (Mt 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1541) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4). She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven: Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end (St. Teresa of Avila, *Excl.* 15:3).

(Mk 9, 42-50) Scandal

[42] "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe (in me) to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. [43] If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. [44] [45] And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. [46] [47] And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, [48] where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' [49] "Everyone will be salted with fire. [50] Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another."

(CCC 2284) Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense. (CCC 2285) Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who

cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized. It prompted our Lord to utter this curse: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mt 18:6; Cf. 1 Cor 8:10-13). Scandal is grave when given by those who by nature or office are obliged to teach and educate others. Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees on this account: he likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing (Cf. Mt 7:15). (CCC 1034) Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost (Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather... all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" (Mt 25:41). (CCC 1789) Some rules apply in every case: - One may never do evil so that good may result from it; - the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Mt 7:12; cf. Lk 6:31; Tob 4:15) - charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbor and his conscience: "Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience... you sin against Christ" (1 Cor 8:12). Therefore "it is right not to... do anything that makes your brother stumble" (Rom 14:21).

Mark 10

(Mk 10, 1-12) They are no longer two but one flesh

[1] He set out from there and went into the district of Judea (and) across the Jordan. Again crowds gathered around him and, as was his custom, he again taught them. [2] The Pharisees approached and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. [3] He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" [4] They replied, "Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." [5] But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. [6] But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. [7] For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother (and be joined to his wife), [8] **and the two shall become one flesh.**' **So they are no longer two but one flesh.** [9] **Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.**" [10] In the house the disciples again questioned him about this. [11] He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; [12] and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

(CCC 1627) The consent consists in a "human act by which the partners mutually give themselves to each other": "I take you to be my wife" - "I take you to be my husband" (GS 48 § 1; OCM 45; cf. CIC, can. 1057 § 2). This consent that binds the spouses to each other finds its fulfillment in the two "becoming one flesh" (Gen 2:24; cf. Mt 10:8; Eph 5:31). (CCC 1639) The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself (Cf. Mk 10:9). From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law,... even in the eyes of society" (GS 48 § 1). The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's

covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love" (GS 48 § 2). (CCC 1640) Thus the *marriage bond* has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. This bond, which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, is a reality, henceforth irrevocable, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom (Cf. CIC, can. 1141).

(Mk 10, 13-16) Let the children come to me

[13] And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. [14] When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. [15] Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." [16] Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

(CCC 526) To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom (Cf. Mt 18:3-4). For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God" (Jn 3: 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12). Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us (Cf. Gal 4:19). Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange": O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity (*LH*, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st). (CCC 1244) *First Holy Communion*. Having become a child of God clothed with the wedding garment, the neophyte is admitted "to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9) and receives the food of the new life, the body and blood of Christ. The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed, even little children, recalling the Lord's words: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them" (Mk 10:14). The Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptized child brought to the altar for the praying of the Our Father. (CCC 1261) As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them" (Mk 10:14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4), allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.

(Mk 10, 17-22) Sell what you have then come follow me

[17] As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [18] Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. [19] You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; you

shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother." [20] He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." [21] Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. **Go, sell what you have, and give to (the) poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.**" [22] At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

(CCC 2556) Detachment from riches is necessary for entering the Kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (CCC 2557) "I want to see God" expresses the true desire of man. Thirst for God is quenched by the water of eternal life (cf. In 4:14). (CCC 2547) The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods (Lk 6:24). "Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 1, 1, 3: PL 34, 1232). Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow (Cf. Mt 6:25-34). Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God. (CCC 2548) Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude.... In Scripture, to see is to possess.... Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* 6: PG 44, 1265A).

(Mk 10, 23-27) How hard it is rich to enter the kingdom

[23] Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" [24] The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "**Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!** [25] **It is easier for a camel to pass through (the) eye of (a) needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.**" [26] They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" [27] Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

(CCC 2551) "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt 6:21). (CCC 2443) God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 5:42; 10:8). It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones (Cf. Mt 25:31-36). When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence (Mt 11:5; cf. Lk 4:18). (CCC 2407) In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of *temperance*, so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods; the practice of the virtue of *justice*, to preserve our neighbor's rights and render him what is his due; and the practice of *solidarity*, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake... became poor so that by his poverty, you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). (CCC 2445) Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have

rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you (Jas 5:1-6).

(Mk 10, 28-31) Will receive eternal life

[28] Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." [29] Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel [30] who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. [31] But many that are first will be last, and (the) last will be first."

(CCC 1618) Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social (Cf. Lk 14:26; Mk 10:28-31). From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, to be intent on the things of the Lord, to seek to please him, and to go out to meet the Bridegroom who is coming (Cf. Rev 14:4; 1 Cor 7:32; Mt 2:56). Christ himself has invited certain persons to follow him in this way of life, of which he remains the model: "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Mt 19:12). (CCC 1619) Virginité for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace, a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away (Cf. Mk 12:25; 1 Cor 7:31). (CCC 1821) We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will (Cf. Rom 8:28-30; Mt 7:21). In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" (Mt 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1541) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4). She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven: Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end (St. Teresa of Avila, *Excl.* 15:3).

(Mk 10, 32-34) Announce of Passion and Resurrection

[32] They were on the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went ahead of them. They were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them what was going to

happen to him. [33] "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles [34] who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death, but after three days he will rise."

(CCC 557) "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1). By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34). (CCC 569) Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf. Heb 12:3).

(Mk 10, 35-40) To sit at your right and your left

[35] Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." [36] He replied, "What do you wish (me) to do for you?" [37] They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." [38] Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" [39] They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; [40] but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared."

(CCC 2235) Those who exercise authority should do so as a service. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). The exercise of authority is measured morally in terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law. (CCC 876) Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is *its character as service*. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly "slaves of Christ" (Cf. Rom 1:1) in the image of him who freely took "the form of a slave" for us (Phil 2:7). Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all (Cf. 1 Cor 9:19).

(Mk 10, 41-45) Did not come to be served but to serve

[41] When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. [42] Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. [43] But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; [44] whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. [45] For ***the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.***"

(CCC 608) After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away

the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Lk 3:21; Mt 3:14-15; Jn 1:36). By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover (Isa 53:7, 12; cf. Jer 11:19; Ex 12:3-14; Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7). Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). (CCC 623) By his loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfils the atoning mission (cf. Isa 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11; cf. Rom 5:19).

(Mk 10, 46-52) Jesus gives the sight to a blind man

[46] They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. [47] On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." [48] And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." [49] Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you." [50] He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. [51] Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." [52] Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

(CCC 439) Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to Israel (Cf. Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15). Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political (Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21). (CCC 2616) Prayer to *Jesus* is answered by him already during his ministry, through signs that anticipate the power of his death and Resurrection: Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) (Cf. Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Cf. Lk 23:39-43) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman) (Cf. Mk 25; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38). The urgent request of the blind men, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" or "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has been renewed in the traditional prayer to Jesus known as the *Jesus Prayer*: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Mt 9:27, Mk 10:48). Healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith: "Your faith has made you well; go in peace." St. Augustine wonderfully summarizes the three dimensions of Jesus' prayer: "He prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us" (St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 85, 1: PL 37, 1081; cf. GILH 7).

Mark 11

(Mk 11, 1-11) Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

[1] When they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples [2] and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. [3] If anyone should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?' reply, 'The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.'" [4] So they went off and found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. [5] Some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" [6] They answered them just as Jesus had told them to, and they permitted them to do it. [7] So they brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks over it. And he sat on it. [8] Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. [9] Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! [10] Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!" [11] He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple area. He looked around at everything and, since it was already late, went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

(CCC 570) Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifests the coming of the kingdom that the Messiah-King, welcomed into his city by children and the humble of heart, is going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. (CCC 571) The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all" (Heb 9:26) by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ. (CCC 559) How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David" (Lk 1:32; cf. Mt 21:1-11; Jn 6:15). Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass" (Ps 24:7-10; Zech 9:9). Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth (Cf. Jn 18:37). And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds (Cf. Mt 21:15-16; cf. Ps 8:3; Lk 19:38; 2:14). Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Cf. Ps 118:26), is taken up by the Church in the "*Sanctus*" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover. (CCC 560) *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem* manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

(Mk 11, 12-14) He found nothing but leaves

[12] The next day as they were leaving Bethany he was hungry. [13] Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the

time for figs. [14] And he said to it in reply, "May no one ever eat of your fruit again!" And his disciples heard it.

(CCC 1724) The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God (Cf. the parable of the sower: Mt 13:3-23).

(Mk 11, 15-19) "House of prayer" made "den of thieves"

[15] They came to Jerusalem, and on entering the temple area he began to drive out those selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. [16] He did not permit anyone to carry anything through the temple area. [17] Then he taught them saying, "Is it not written: **'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples'? But you have made it a den of thieves.**" [18] The chief priests and the scribes came to hear of it and were seeking a way to put him to death, yet they feared him because the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. [19] When evening came, they went out of the city.

(CCC 512) Concerning Christ's life the Creed speaks only about the mysteries of the Incarnation (conception and birth) and Paschal mystery (passion, crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension). It says nothing explicitly about the mysteries of Jesus' hidden or public life, but the articles of faith concerning his Incarnation and Passover do shed light on the *whole* of his earthly life. "All that Jesus did and taught, from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven", is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter. (CCC 576) In the eyes of many in Israel, Jesus seems to be acting against essential institutions of the Chosen People: - submission to the whole of the Law in its written commandments and, for the Pharisees, in the interpretation of oral tradition; - the centrality of the Temple at Jerusalem as the holy place where God's presence dwells in a special way; - faith in the one God whose glory no man can share.

(Mk 11, 20-25) Have faith in God

[20] Early in the morning, as they were walking along, they saw the fig tree withered to its roots. [21] Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." [22] Jesus said to them in reply, "**Have faith in God.**" [23] Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. [24] Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. [25] When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions." [26].

(CCC 2610) Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us *filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mk 11:24). Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23; cf. Mt 21:22). Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith"

of his own disciples (Cf. Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26) as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman (Cf. Mt 8:10; 15:28). (CCC 2611) The prayer of faith consists not only in saying "Lord, Lord," but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father (Cf. Mt 7:21). Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan (Cf. Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2; Jn 4:34). (CCC 2840) Now - and this is daunting - this outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see (Cf. 1 Jn 4:20). In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace. (CCC 2841) This petition is so important that it is the only one to which the Lord returns and which he develops explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount (Cf. Mt 6:14-15; 5:23-24; Mk 11:25). This crucial requirement of the covenant mystery is impossible for man. But "with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26).

(Mk 11, 27-33) Who gave you this authority?

[27] They returned once more to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple area, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders approached him [28] and said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them?" [29] Jesus said to them, "I shall ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. [30] Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin? Answer me." [31] They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say, 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say, '(Then) why did you not believe him?' [32] But shall we say, 'Of human origin?'" - they feared the crowd, for they all thought John really was a prophet. [33] So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." Then Jesus said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."

(CCC 240) Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son who, reciprocally, is Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11-27). (CCC 241) For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature" (Jn 1:1; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). (CCC 239) By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood (Cf. Isa 66:13; Ps 131:2), which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction

between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard (Cf. Ps 27:10; Eph 3:14; Isa 49:15): no one is father as God is Father.

Mark 12

(Mk 12, 1-12) From "Stone rejected" to "cornerstone"

[1] He began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and left on a journey. [2] At the proper time he sent a servant to the tenants to obtain from them some of the produce of the vineyard. [3] But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. [4] Again he sent them another servant. And that one they beat over the head and treated shamefully. [5] He sent yet another whom they killed. So, too, many others; some they beat, others they killed. [6] He had one other to send, a beloved son. He sent him to them last of all, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' [7] But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' [8] So they seized him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. [9] What (then) will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come, put the tenants to death, and give the vineyard to others. [10] Have you not read this scripture passage: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; [11] by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes'?" [12] They were seeking to arrest him, but they feared the crowd, for they realized that he had addressed the parable to them. So they left him and went away.

(CCC 546) Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching (Cf. Mk 4:33-34). Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything (Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14). Words are not enough, deeds are required (Cf. Mt 21:28-32). The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? (Cf. Mt 13:3-9). What use has he made of the talents he has received? (Cf. Mt 25:14-30). Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 13:11). For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic (Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15). (CCC 386) Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize *the profound relation of man to God*, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history. (CCC 522) The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant" (Heb 9:15). He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

(Mk 12, 13-17) To pay the census tax to Caesar

[13] They sent some Pharisees and Herodians to him to ensnare him in his speech. [14] They came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a person's status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?" 15 Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." [16] They brought one to him and he said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They replied to him, "Caesar's." [17] So Jesus said to them, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." They were utterly amazed at him.

(CCC 2238) Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God, who has made them stewards of his gifts: (Cf. Rom 13:1-2) "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.... Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (1 Pet 2:13, 16). Their loyal collaboration includes the right, and at times the duty, to voice their just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community. (CCC 450) From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not "the Lord" (Cf. Rev 11:15; Mk 12:17; Acts 5:29). "The Church... believes that the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master" (GS 10 § 3; cf. 45 § 2). (CCC 2242) The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21). "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29): When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel (GS 74 § 5).

(Mk 12, 18-27) He is not God of the dead but of the living

[18] Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and put this question to him, [19] saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, 'If someone's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.'" [20] Now there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died, leaving no descendants. [21] So the second married her and died, leaving no descendants, and the third likewise. [22] And the seven left no descendants. Last of all the woman also died. [23] At the resurrection (when they arise) whose wife will she be? For all

seven had been married to her." [24] Jesus said to them, "Are you not misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God? [25] When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. [26] As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, 'I am the God of Abraham, (the) God of Isaac, and (the) God of Jacob'? [27] He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled."

(CCC 993) The Pharisees and many of the Lord's contemporaries hoped for the resurrection. Jesus teaches it firmly. To the Sadducees who deny it he answers, "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?" (Mk 12:24; cf. Jn 11:24; Acts 23:6). Faith in the resurrection rests on faith in God who "is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mk 12:27). (CCC 994) But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54). Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life (Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11), announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39). The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day (Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22). (CCC 1619) Virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace, a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away (Cf. Mk 12:25; 1 Cor 7:31).

(Mk 12, 28-34) The first of all the commandments

[28] One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" [29] Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! [30] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' [31] The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." [32] The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' [33] And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." [34] And when Jesus saw that (he) answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

(CCC 592) Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf. Mt 5:17-19) with such perfection (cf. Jn 8:46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf. Mt 5:33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf. Heb 9:15). (CCC 595) Among the religious authorities of Jerusalem, not only were the Pharisee Nicodemus and the prominent Joseph of Arimathea both secret disciples of Jesus, but there was also long-standing dissension about him, so much so that St. John says of these authorities on the very eve of Christ's Passion, "many... believed in him", though very imperfectly (Jn 12:42; cf. 7:50; 9:16-17; 10:19-21; 19:38-39). This is not

surprising, if one recalls that on the day after Pentecost "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" and "some believers... belonged to the party of the Pharisees", to the point that St. James could tell St. Paul, "How many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; and they are all zealous for the Law" (Acts 6:7; 15:5; 21:20).

(Mk 12, 35-37) How is the Lord son of David?

[35] As Jesus was teaching in the temple area he said, "How do the scribes claim that the Messiah is the son of David? [36] David himself, inspired by the holy Spirit, said: 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies under your feet.'" [37] David himself calls him 'lord'; so how is he his son?" (The) great crowd heard this with delight.

(CCC 202) Jesus himself affirms that God is "the one Lord" whom you must love "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk 12:29-30). At the same time Jesus gives us to understand that he himself is "the Lord" (Cf. Mk 12:35-37). To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as "Lord and giver of life" introduce any division into the One God: We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal infinite (*immensus*) and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty and ineffable, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple (Lateran Council IV: DS 800). (CCC 590) Only the divine identity of Jesus' person can justify so absolute a claim as "He who is not with me is against me"; and his saying that there was in him "something greater than Jonah,... greater than Solomon", something "greater than the Temple"; his reminder that David had called the Messiah his Lord (Cf. Mt 12:6, 30, 36, 37, 41-42), and his affirmations, "Before Abraham was, I AM", and even "I and the Father are one" (Jn 8:58; 10:30).

(Mk 12, 38-40) Beware of the scribes

[38] In the course of his teaching he said, "**Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, [39] seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. [40] They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext, recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation.**"

(CCC 678) Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgement of the Last Day in his preaching (Cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3:19; Mt 3:7-12). Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (Cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (Cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (Cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (CCC 679) Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgement on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. The Father has given "all judgement to the Son" (Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim

4:1). Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself (Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26). By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love (Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

(Mk 12, 41-44) This poor widow put in all she had

[41] He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. [42] A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. [43] Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, ***this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury.*** [44] For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, ***from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.***"

(CCC 2544) Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel (Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35). Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on (Cf. Lk 21:4). The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. (CCC 2443) God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 5:42; 10:8). It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones (Cf. Mt 25:31-36). When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence (Mt 11:5; cf. Lk 4:18). (CCC 2444) "The Church's love for the poor... is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor (CA 57; cf. Lk 6:20-22, Mt 8:20; Mk 12:41-44). Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need" (Eph 4:28). It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty (Cf. CA 57).

Mark 13

(Mk 13, 1-4) No one stone will be left upon another

[1] As he was making his way out of the temple area one of his disciples said to him, "Look, teacher, what stones and what buildings!" [2] Jesus said to him, "***Do you see these great buildings? There will not be one stone left upon another that will not be thrown down.***" [3] As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple area, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, [4] "Tell us, when will this happen, and what sign will there be when all these things are about to come to an end?"

(CCC 586) Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church (Cf. Mt 8:4; 16:18; 17:24-27; Lk 17:14; Jn 4:22; 18:20). He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men (Cf. Jn

2:21; Mt 12:6). Therefore his being put to bodily death (Cf. Jn 2:18-22) presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father" (Jn 4:21; cf. 4:23-24; Mt 27:5; Heb 9:11; Rev 21:22).

(Mk 13, 5-13) Watch out for yourselves

[5] Jesus began to say to them, "**See that no one deceives you.** [6] Many will come in my name saying, 'I am he,' and they will deceive many. [7] When you hear of wars and reports of wars do not be alarmed; such things must happen, but it will not yet be the end. [8] Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes from place to place and there will be famines. These are the beginnings of the labor pains. [9] "**Watch out for yourselves.** They will hand you over to the courts. You will be beaten in synagogues. You will be arraigned before governors and kings because of me, as a witness before them. [10] But the gospel must first be preached to all nations. [11] When they lead you away and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. But say whatever will be given to you at that hour. For it will not be you who are speaking but the holy Spirit. [12] Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. [13] You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

(CCC 2612) In Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15). He calls his hearers to conversion and faith, but also to *watchfulness*. In prayer the disciple keeps watch, attentive to Him Who Is and Him Who Comes, in memory of his first coming in the lowliness of the flesh, and in the hope of his second coming in glory (Cf. Mk 13; Lk 21:34-36). In communion with their Master, the disciples' prayer is a battle; only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation (Cf. Lk 22:40, 46). (CCC 2849) Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony (Cf. Mt 4:1-11; 26:36-44). In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is "custody of the heart," and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: "Keep them in your name" (Jn 17:11; Cf. Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14:38; Lk 12:35-40). The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch (Cf. 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8). Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake" (Rev 16:15).

(Mk 13, 14-23) When you see the desolating abomination

[14] "**When you see the desolating abomination standing where he should not (let the reader understand),** then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, [15] (and) a person on a housetop must not go down or enter to get anything out of his house, [16] and a person in a field must not return to get his cloak. [17] Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those

days. [18] Pray that this does not happen in winter. [19] For those times will have tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of God's creation until now, nor ever will be. [20] If the Lord had not shortened those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he did shorten the days. [21] If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Messiah! Look, there he is!' do not believe it. [22] False messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders in order to mislead, if that were possible, the elect. [23] Be watchful! I have told it all to you beforehand.

(CCC 673) Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent (Cf. Rev 22:20), even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7; Cf. Mk 13:32). This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed" (Cf. Mt 24:44; 1 Th 5:2; 2 Th 2:3-12). (CCC 671) Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the King's return to earth (Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 25:31). This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover (Cf. 2 Th 2:7). Until everything is subject to him, "until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 2 Pt 3:13; Rom 8:19-22; 1 Cor 15:28). That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him (Cf. 1 Cor 11:26; 2 Pt 3:11-12): *Marana tha!* "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:17, 20).

(Mk 13, 24-27) The Son of Man coming in the clouds

[24] "But in those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, [25] and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. [26] **And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory,** [27] and then he will send out the angels and gather (his) elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

(CCC 675) Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers (Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12). The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth (Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20) will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh (Cf. 2 Th 2:4-12; 1 Th 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; 1 Jn 2:18, 22).

(Mk 13, 28-32) Learn a lesson from the fig tree

[28] "**Learn a lesson from the fig tree.** When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. [29] In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. [30] Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. [31] **Heaven and earth will pass away, but**

my words will not pass away. [32] "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

(CCC 474) By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal (Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30). What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal (Cf. Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7). (CCC 670 Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfilment. We are already at "the last hour" (1 Jn 2:18; cf. 1 Pt 4:7). "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 10:11). Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church (Cf. Mk 16:17-18, 20).

(Mk 13, 33-37) **Be watchful! Be alert!**

[33] **Be watchful! Be alert!** You do not know when the time will come. [34] It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. [35] **Watch, therefore;** you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. [36] May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. [37] What I say to you, I say to all: **"Watch!"**

(CCC 672) Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel (Cf. Acts 1:6-7) which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love and peace (Cf. Isa 11:1-9). According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by "distress" and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church (Cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 7:26; Eph 5:16; 1 Pt 4:17) and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching (Cf. Mt 25:1, 13; Mk 13:33-37; 1 Jn 2:18; 4:3; 1 Tim 4:1). (CCC 673) Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent (Cf. Rev 22:20), even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7; Cf. Mk 13:32). This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed" (Cf. Mt 24:44; 1 Th 5:2; 2 Th 2:3-12).

Mark 14

(Mk 14, 1-2) Chief priests seek to arrest Jesus

[1] The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to take place in two days' time. **So the chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to arrest him by treachery and put him to death.** [2] They said, "Not during the festival, for fear that there may be a riot among the people."

(CCC 2262) In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord recalls the commandment, "You shall not kill" (Mt 5:21) and adds to it the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance. Going further, Christ asks his disciples to turn the other cheek, to love

their enemies (Cf. Mt 5:22-39; 5:44). He did not defend himself and told Peter to leave his sword in its sheath (Cf. Mt 26:52). (CCC 1739) *Freedom and sin*. Man's freedom is limited and fallible. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom.

(Mk 14, 3-9) She has done a good thing for me

[3] When he was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head. [4] There were some who were indignant. "Why has there been this waste of perfumed oil? [5] It could have been sold for more than three hundred days' wages and the money given to the poor." They were infuriated with her. [6] Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you make trouble for her? **She has done a good thing for me.** [7] The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me. [8] She has done what she could. She has anticipated anointing my body for burial. [9] Amen, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

(CCC 428) Whoever is called "to teach Christ" must first seek "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"; he must suffer "the loss of all things..." in order to "gain Christ and be found in him", and "to know him and the power of his resurrection, and [to] share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible [he] may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:8-11). (CCC 1189) The liturgical celebration involves signs and symbols relating to creation (candles, water, fire), human life (washing, anointing, breaking bread) and the history of salvation (the rites of the Passover). Integrated into the world of faith and taken up by the power of the Holy Spirit, these cosmic elements, human rituals, and gestures of remembrance of God become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ.

(Mk 14, 10-11) Judas' betrayal

[10] Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went off to the chief priests to hand him over to them. [11] When they heard him they were pleased and promised to pay him money. Then he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

(CCC 1851) It is precisely in the Passion, when the mercy of Christ is about to vanquish it, that sin most clearly manifests its violence and its many forms: unbelief, murderous hatred, shunning and mockery by the leaders and the people, Pilate's cowardice and the cruelty of the soldiers, Judas' betrayal - so bitter to Jesus, Peter's denial and the disciples' flight. However, at the very hour of darkness, the hour of the prince of this world (Cf. Jn 14:30), the sacrifice of Christ secretly becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly.

(Mk 14, 12-16) Make the preparations for us there

[12] On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want

us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" [13] He sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. [14] Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' [15] Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. **Make the preparations for us there.**" [16] The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

(CCC 1340) By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.

(Mk 14, 17-25) Take it; this is my body

[17] When it was evening, he came with the Twelve. [18] And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." [19] They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, "Surely it is not I?" [20] He said to them, "One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish. [21] For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." [22] While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." [23] Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. [24] He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. [25] Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

(CCC 1324) The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (LG 11). "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch" (PO 5). (CCC 1403) At the Last Supper the Lord himself directed his disciples' attention toward the fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God: "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:29; cf. Lk 22:18; Mk 14 25). Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns her gaze "to him who is to come." In her prayer she calls for his coming: "*Marana tha!*" "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 1:4; 22 20; 1 Cor 16 22). "May your grace come and this world pass away!" (*Didache* 10, 6: SCh 248, 180).

(Mk 14, 26-42) Father take this cup away from me

[26] Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. [27] Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will have your faith shaken, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed.' [28] But after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." [29] Peter said to him, "Even though all should have their faith shaken, mine will not be." [30]

Then Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." [31] But he vehemently replied, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And they all spoke similarly. [32] Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." [33] He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. [34] Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch." [35] He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; [36] he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will." [37] When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? [38] Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." [39] Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. [40] Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. [41] He returned a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. [42] Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand."

(CCC 612) The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani (Cf. Mt 26:42; Lk 22:20), making himself "obedient unto death". Jesus prays: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Phil 2:8; Mt 26:39; cf. Heb 5:7-8). Thus he expresses the horror that death represented for his human nature. Like ours, his human nature is destined for eternal life; but unlike ours, it is perfectly exempt from sin, the cause of death (Cf. Rom 5:12; Heb 4:15). Above all, his human nature has been assumed by the divine person of the "Author of life", the "Living One" (Cf. Acts 3:15; Rev 1:17; Jn 1:4; 5:26). By accepting in his human will that the Father's will be done, he accepts his death as redemptive, for "he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pt 2:24; cf. Mt 26:42). (CCC 613) Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:19), and the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28; cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 1 Cor 11:25). (CCC 614) This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices (Cf. Heb 10:10). First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience (Cf. Jn 10:17-18, 15:13; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 4:10). 612 613 614

(Mk 14, 43-52) Jesus arrested

[43] Then, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. [44] His betrayer had arranged a

signal with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely." [45] He came and immediately went over to him and said, "Rabbi." And he kissed him. [46] At this they laid hands on him and arrested him. [47] One of the bystanders drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. [48] Jesus said to them in reply, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs, to seize me? [49] Day after day I was with you teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me; but that the scriptures may be fulfilled." [50] And they all left him and fled. [51] Now a young man followed him wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him, [52] but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked.

(CCC 409) This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one" (I Jn 5:19; cf. 1 Pt 5:8) makes man's life a battle: The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity (GS 37 § 2).

(Mk 14, 53-65) They led Jesus away to the high priest

[53] *They led Jesus away to the high priest*, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. [54] Peter followed him at a distance into the high priest's courtyard and was seated with the guards, warming himself at the fire. [55] The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none. [56] Many gave false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. [57] Some took the stand and testified falsely against him, alleging, [58] "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands.'" [59] Even so their testimony did not agree. [60] The high priest rose before the assembly and questioned Jesus, saying, "Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?" [61] 16 But he was silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him and said to him, "Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?" [62] Then Jesus answered, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" [63] At that the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further need have we of witnesses? [64] You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as deserving to die. [65] Some began to spit on him. They blindfolded him and struck him and said to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards greeted him with blows.

(CCC 585) On the threshold of his Passion Jesus announced the coming destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain "one stone upon another" (Cf. Mt 24:1-2). By doing so, he announced a sign of the last days, which were to begin with his own Passover (Cf. Mt 24:3; Lk 13:35). But this prophecy would be distorted in its telling by false witnesses during his interrogation at the high priest's house, and would be thrown back at him as an insult when he was

nailed to the cross (Cf. Mk 14:57-58; Mt 27:39-40). (CCC 443) Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am"(Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62). Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels (Cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36). He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father", except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father'", and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father" (Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17). (CCC 572 The Church remains faithful to the interpretation of "all the Scriptures" that Jesus gave both before and after his Passover: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26-27, 44-45). Jesus' sufferings took their historical, concrete form from the fact that he was "rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes", who handed "him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (Mk 8:31; Mt 20:19).

(Mk 14, 66-72) Peter denies Jesus three times

[66] While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's maids came along. [67] Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, "You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus." [68] But he denied it saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." So he went out into the outer court. [Then the cock crowed.] [69] The maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." [70] Once again he denied it. A little later the bystanders said to Peter once more, "Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean." [71] He began to curse and to swear, "I do not know this man about whom you are talking." [72] And immediately a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." He broke down and wept.

(CCC 1427) Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism (Cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life. (CCC 1429) St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him (Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17). The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!" (Rev 2:5, 16). St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance" (St. Ambrose, *ep.* 41, 12: PL 16, 1116).

Mark 15

(Mk 15, 1-15) Jesus handed over to Pilate

[1] As soon as morning came, the chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. [2] Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." [3] The chief priests accused him of many things. [4] Again Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of." [5] Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. [6] Now on the occasion of the feast he used to release to them one prisoner whom they requested. [7] A man called Barabbas was then in prison along with the rebels who had committed murder in a rebellion. [8] The crowd came forward and began to ask him to do for them as he was accustomed. [9] Pilate answered, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" [10] For he knew that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over. [11] But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. [12] Pilate again said to them in reply, "Then what (do you want) me to do with (the man you call) the king of the Jews?" [13] They shouted again, "Crucify him." [14] Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Crucify him." [15] So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

(CCC 594) Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Saviour God himself (cf. Jn 5:16-18). Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man (cf. Jn 1:14), saw in him only a man who made himself God (Jn 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer. (CCC 596) The religious authorities in Jerusalem were not unanimous about what stance to take towards Jesus (Cf. Jn 9:16; 10:19). The Pharisees threatened to excommunicate his followers (Cf. Jn 9:22). To those who feared that "everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation", the high priest Caiaphas replied by prophesying: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (Jn 11:48-50). The Sanhedrin, having declared Jesus deserving of death as a blasphemer but having lost the right to put anyone to death, hands him over to the Romans, accusing him of political revolt, a charge that puts him in the same category as Barabbas who had been accused of sedition (Cf. Mt 26:66; Jn 18:31; Lk 23:2, 19). The chief priests also threatened Pilate politically so that he would condemn Jesus to death (Cf. Jn 19:12, 15, 21). (CCC 597) The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles' calls to conversion after Pentecost (Cf. Mk 15:11; Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-14; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; 1 Th 2:14-15). Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept "the ignorance" of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders (Cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17). Still less can we extend responsibility

to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: "His blood be on us and on our children!", a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence (Mt 27:25; cf. Acts 5:28; 18:6). As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council:... [N]either all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion... [T]he Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture (NA 4).

(Mk 15, 16-20) They placed a crown of thorns on him

[16] The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. [17] **They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him.** [18] They began to salute him with, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [19] and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage. [20] And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

(CCC 672) Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel (Cf. Acts 1:6-7) which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love and peace (Cf. Isa 11:1-9). According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by "distress" and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church (Cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 7:26; Eph 5:16; 1 Pt 4:17) and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching (Cf. Mt 25:1, 13; Mk 13:33-37; 1 Jn 2:18; 4:3; 1 Tim 4:1). (CCC 671) Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled "with power and great glory" by the King's return to earth (Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 25:31). This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover (Cf. 2 Th 2:7). Until everything is subject to him, "until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 2 Pt 3:13; Rom 8:19-22; 1 Cor 15:28). That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him (Cf. 1 Cor 11:26; 2 Pt 3:11-12): *Marana tha!* "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:17, 20).

(Mk 15, 21-32) They crucified him

[21] They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. [22] They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull). [23] They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. [24] Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. [25] It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. [26] The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." [27] With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. [28]. [29] Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, [30] save yourself by coming down

from the cross." [31] Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. [32] Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.

(CCC 571) The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all" (Heb 9:26) by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ. (CCC 573) Faith can therefore try to examine the circumstances of Jesus' death, faithfully handed on by the Gospels (Cf. DV 19) and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption. (CCC 591) Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished (Jn 10:36-38). But such an act of faith must go through a mysterious death to self, for a new "birth from above" under the influence of divine grace (Cf. Jn 3:7; 6:44). Such a demand for conversion in the face of so surprising a fulfilment of the promises (Cf. Isa 53:1) allows one to understand the Sanhedrin's tragic misunderstanding of Jesus: they judged that he deserved the death sentence as a blasphemer (Cf. Mk 3:6; Mt 26:64-66). The members of the Sanhedrin were thus acting at the same time out of "ignorance" and the "hardness" of their "unbelief" (Cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17-18; Mk 3:5; Rom 11:25, 20).

(Mk 15, 33-39) Truly this man was the Son of God!

[33] At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. [34] And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [35] Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "Look, he is calling Elijah." [36] One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down." [37] Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. [38] The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. [39] When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, "**Truly this man was the Son of God!**"

(CCC 609) By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 13:1; 15:13). In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men (Cf. Heb 2:10, 17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9). Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:18). Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death (Cf. Jn 18:4-6; Mt 26:53). (CCC 613) Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:19), and the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28; cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 1 Cor 11:25). (CCC 614)

This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices (Cf. Heb 10:10). First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience (Cf. Jn 10:17-18, 15:13; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 4:10). (CCC 615) "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an *offering for sin*", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:10-12). Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father (Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529). (CCC 1009) *Death is transformed by Christ*. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will (Cf. Mk 14:33-34; Heb 5:7-8). The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing (Cf. Rom 5:19-21).

(Mk 15, 40-41) There were also women looking on

[40] There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome. [41] These women had followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him. There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

(CCC 2618) The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. At Cana (Cf. Jn 2:1-12). The mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast - that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross (Cf. Jn 19:25-27), that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living." (CCC 165) It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope... believed against hope" (Rom 4:18); to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith", walked into the "night of faith" (LG 58; John Paul II, RMat 18) in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2). (CCC 144) To obey (from the Latin *ob-audire*, to "hear or listen to") in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

(Mk 15, 42-47) Laid him in a tomb hewn out of the rock

[42] When it was already evening, since it was the day of preparation, the day before the sabbath, [43] Joseph of Arimathea, 19 a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. [44] Pilate

was amazed that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had already died. [45] And when he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. [46] **Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.** Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. [47] Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph watched where he was laid.

(CCC 623) By his loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfils the atoning mission (cf. Isa 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11; cf. Rom 5:19). (CCC 624) "By the grace of God" Jesus tasted death "for every one" (Heb 2:9). In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only "die for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3) but should also "taste death", experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb (Cf. Jn 19:42), reveals God's great sabbath rest (Cf. Heb 4:7-9) after the fulfilment (Cf. Jn 19:30) of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe (Cf. Col 1:18-20). (CCC 625) Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. The same person of the "Living One" can say, "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18): God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, *so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life*, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech.* 16: PG 45, 52D).

Mark 16

(Mk 16, 1-8) Jesus has been raised; he is not here.

[1] When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. [2] Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. [3] They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" [4] When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large. [5] On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. [6] He said to them, "Do not be amazed! **You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.** Behold the place where they laid him. [7] But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'" [8] Then they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

(CCC 333) From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the

firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Heb 1:6). Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Lk 2:14). They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been (Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13,19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; 2 Macc 10:29-30; 11:8). Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection (Cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7). They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement. (Cf. Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9. (CCC 641) Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31, 42). Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves (Cf. Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18). They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers (Cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32), and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34, 36). (CCC 2174) Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week" (Cf. Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1). Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath (Cf. Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1), it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day (*he kuriake hemera, dies dominica*) Sunday: We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead (St. Justin, *I Apol.* 67: PG 6, 429 and 432).

(Mk 16, 9-13) Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene

[9] When he had risen, early on the first day of the week, **he appeared first to Mary Magdalene**, out of whom he had driven seven demons. [10] She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. [11] When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. [12] After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. [13] They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either.

(CCC 643) Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold (Cf. Lk 22:31-32). The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ("looking sad" Lk 24:17; cf. Jn 20:19) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an "idle tale" (Lk 24:11; cf. Mk 16:11, 13). When

Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, "he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen" (Mk 16:14). (CCC 644) Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. "In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering" (Lk 24:38-41). Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee "some doubted" (Cf. Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17). Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.

(Mk 16, 14) Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief

[14] (But) later, as the eleven were at table, **he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief** and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised.

(CCC 645) By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion (Cf. Lk 24:30, 39-40, 41-43; Jn 20:20, 27; 21:9, 13-15). Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm (Cf. Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15, 36; Jn 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4). For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith (Cf. Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4, 7).

(Mk 16, 15-18) Proclaim the gospel to every creature

[15] He said to them, "**Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.** [16] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. [17] These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. [18] They will pick up serpents (with their hands), and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

(CCC 1257) The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation (Cf. Jn 3:5). He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them (Cf. Mt 28:19-20; cf. Council of Trent (1547) DS 1618; LG 14; AG 5). Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament (Cf. Mk 16:16). The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." *God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.* (CCC 666) Jesus Christ, the head of the Church,

precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever. (CCC 667) Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

(Mk 16, 19-20) The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven

[19] So then *the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.* [20] But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

(CCC 665) Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. Acts 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf. Col 3:3). (CCC 668) "Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom 14:9). Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion", for the Father "has put all things under his feet" (Eph 1:20-22). Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are "set forth" and transcendently fulfilled (Eph 1:10; cf. 4:10; 1 Cor 15:24, 27-28). (CCC 670) Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfilment. We are already at "the last hour" (1 Jn 2:18; cf. 1 Pt 4:7). "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect" (LG 48 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 10:11). Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church (Cf. Mk 16:17-18, 20).